

Western Sahara, natural's resources and foreign domination
Sáhara Occidental, recursos naturales y dominación extranjera
Saara Ocidental, recursos naturais e dominação estrangeira

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Abstract

Western Sahara is the last colony on the African continent that, to this day, has still not completed its decolonization process -established in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1514- for which the Sahrawi people have been legitimately fighting for over 50 years, enduring occupation, exile, refuge, and all forms of repressive and systematic foreign colonialism directed at their land and their people. Currently, one of these forms of colonialism, exercised on a large scale with external and global support and funding, is the plundering of its natural resources, both traditional (mainly phosphate and fishing) and emerging (renewable resources, solar and wind energy). Despite all this, however, states, primarily the major powers, are the ones contradicting international law, both private and public, from the United Nations to the European Courts of Justice (CJEU, judgments 2019 and October 2024), and continue to disregard all legal and judicial resolutions concerning Western Sahara. Specifically, since the United Nations established Western Sahara as a non-self-governing territory in 1963, the Sahrawi people continue to be deprived of the effective exercise of their right to self-determination. In this context, Morocco continues to attract large foreign investments to the occupied Western Sahara through financial and commercial means, seeking to further establish itself and exploit the natural and territorial resources of the Sahrawi people, even though this territory is neither part of Morocco nor under its sovereignty as recognized by international law.

Keywords: Natural resources, Western Sahara, law, colonialism, financing, occupation, legal theory, international courts, justice, European Union, Morocco.

Resumen

El Sáhara Occidental es la última colonia del continente africano que, a día de hoy, todavía sigue sin completar su proceso de descolonización -establecido en la Resolución 1514 Asamblea General de Naciones Unidas-, por el que el pueblo saharaui lleva luchando legítimamente más de 50 años, soportando la ocupación, el exilio, el refugio, y todas las formas represivas y sistemáticas del

colonialismo extranjero dirigida a su tierra y a su pueblo. Actualmente, una de esas formas de colonialismo ejercida a gran escala, con apoyo y financiamiento exterior y mundial, es el expolio de sus recursos naturales, tanto los tradicionales (mayoritariamente el fosfato y la pesca), como los convergentes (los recursos renovables, energía y recursos solares y eólicos). Con todo ello, sin embargo, los Estados, principalmente, las grandes potencias, son las que se contradicen frente a la legalidad internacional, tanto privada como pública, desde las Naciones Unidas hasta los Tribunales Europeos (TJUE, sentencias 2019 y octubre 2024), y siguen incumpliendo todas las resoluciones legales y jurídicas sobre el Sahara Occidental. Concretamente, desde que la Organización de Naciones Unidas, en 1963, estableció el Sahara Occidental como territorio no autónomo, el pueblo saharauí continúa privado del ejercicio efectivo de su derecho de autodeterminación. En este contexto, Marruecos sigue atrayendo financiera y comercialmente a grandes inversiones extranjeras al Sahara Occidental ocupado, para conseguir mayor asentamiento y aprovechamiento de los recursos naturales y territoriales del pueblo saharauí, a pesar de que este territorio no forma parte de Marruecos ni de su soberanía reconocida por el derecho internacional.

Palabras clave: Recursos naturales, Sáhara Occidental, derecho, colonialismo, financiación, ocupación, teoría legal, tribunales internacionales, justicia, Union Europea, Marruecos.

Resumo

O Saara Ocidental é a última colónia do continente africano que, até hoje, ainda não concluiu o seu processo de descolonização — estabelecido na Resolução 1514 da Assembleia Geral das Nações Unidas — pelo qual o povo saarauí luta legitimamente há mais de 50 anos, suportando a ocupação, o exílio, o refúgio e todas as formas de colonialismo estrangeiro repressivo e sistemático dirigido à sua terra e ao seu povo. Actualmente, uma dessas formas de colonialismo, exercida em larga escala com apoio e financiamento externo e global, é a pilhagem dos seus recursos naturais, tanto tradicionais (principalmente fosfato e pesca) como emergentes (recursos renováveis, energia solar e eólica). Apesar de tudo isto, porém, são os Estados, principalmente as grandes potências, que contradizem o direito internacional, tanto privado como público, das Nações Unidas ao Tribunal de Justiça da União Europeia (TJUE, acórdãos de 2019 e outubro de 2024), e continuam a desconsiderar todas as resoluções legais e judiciais relativas ao Saara Ocidental. Especificamente, desde que as Nações Unidas estabeleceram o Saara Ocidental como um território não autónomo em 1963, o povo saarauí continua privado do exercício efectivo do seu direito à autodeterminação. Neste contexto, Marrocos continua a atrair grandes investimentos estrangeiros para o Saara Ocidental ocupado por meios financeiros e comerciais, procurando consolidar a sua posição e explorar os recursos naturais e territoriais do povo saarauí, embora este território não faça parte de Marrocos nem esteja sob a sua soberania, como reconhecido pelo direito internacional.

Palavras-chave: Recursos naturais, Saara Ocidental, direito, colonialismo, financiamento, ocupação,

teoria do direito, tribunais internacionais, justiça, União Europeia, Marrocos.

Introduction

Morocco continues to attract major foreign financial and commercial investments in the occupied Western Sahara (Zohra, 2025), with the aim of consolidating settlement and exploiting the natural and territorial resources of the Sahrawi people. This occurs despite the fact that the territory does not form part of Morocco, nor of its sovereignty as recognized under international law.

Last year, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) issued a final ruling that marked a decisive turning point, reaffirming that Western Sahara is legally distinct and separate from Morocco, and that any agreement affecting its territory or resources requires the consent of the Sahrawi people, who are the sole holders of the right to self-determination (Pascual, 2024).

Within this framework, and following that judicial decision in the fall of 2024, the European Union and Morocco signed a new trade agreement that includes Western Sahara, which initially claimed to “adapt” to the new commercial framework required by the ruling (Gómez, 2025). They unexpectedly announced a new economic cooperation agreement intended to ensure the continuity of trade flows, particularly in the fisheries, agricultural, and energy sectors. From a legal-analytical perspective, the main novelty of this agreement lies in the use of geographic “labeling” as a mechanism of legitimization.

This differentiated labeling of origin is supposed to respect the provenance of products from Western Sahara, requiring them to be marketed under specific geographic indications, without altering the tariff or customs regime applicable to Morocco.

Despite this, the situation still amounts to a tacit omission of the principle of self-determination, since the previous EU–Morocco trade agreement (renewed in October 2025) makes no reference to the status quo of Western Sahara nor to the right to self-determination, in contradiction with the legal and factual grounds established by court jurisprudence.

This contradiction on the part of the European Union ignores Articles 3 and 21 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which establish that EU external action is based on principles such as democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for international law, committing the EU to promote these values globally and to integrate international law and fundamental rights as pillars of its international relations.

This same omission of the right to self-determination recognized for the people (United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1514, still in force today) constitutes, in itself, a form of implicit

recognition of Moroccan administration over the territory.

Yes, states -including Western powers- bear international responsibility for violations of human rights and international law, as affirmed by bodies such as the Human Rights Council and the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which urge compliance with obligations to protect and guarantee rights. This is evident in cases such as Western Sahara, where the ICJ ruled as early as 1975 that the territory was not terra nullius (land belonging to no one), thereby implying obligations of decolonization and self-determination for Spain and the international community. Western Sahara was not a territory without an owner at the time of decolonization by the Kingdom of Spain. All of this derives from the unlawful acts of the Spanish state, including its material and economic support for an illegal occupation persisting since 1975 (No te olvides del Sáhara Occidental, 2025).

Imports originating from Western Sahara, involving European companies in fishing exports, agriculture, or renewable energy projects, constitute a contribution to the occupation. Consequently, such practices give rise to indirect responsibility on the part of the EU and its member states: on the one hand, for violating their own obligations to respect international legality; and on the other, for facilitating the economic and financial exploitation of an occupied territory.

Political, Economic, Social, and Human Implications of the Plundering of Natural Resources in Western Sahara

The economic and political projects developed in the occupied Sáhara Occidental (Western Sahara, a UN-listed Non-Self-Governing Territory under Moroccan occupation) manifest across multiple areas and sectors, ranging from the so-called ecological and energy transition, through renewable energy alternatives, to maritime transport. Paradoxically, at a time when these alternatives are being globally celebrated from environmental and geopolitical perspectives, Morocco capitalizes on them -through international financing and support- thereby consolidating a model of plunder and exploitation that excludes the Saharai people and violates their legitimate rights over their ancestral land and natural resources.

These projects have been implemented in Sáhara Occidental, a territory illegally occupied by Morocco since 1975 and recognized by the United Nations as a Non-Self-Governing Territory pending decolonization. It is precisely there, geographically speaking, along the Atlantic coast of Sáhara Occidental, that large-scale wind and solar power projects are being developed to generate energy for green hydrogen production, which is then projected as an alternative source to meet Europe's future energy demands (Western Sahara Resource Watch, 2025).

The scale of this colonial enterprise over an occupied territory constitutes a profound form of violence against the Saharai people—not only because it involves an illegal military occupation of our land,

but also because it represents a large-scale model of natural resource plunder carried out without the consent of the Saharai people. This exclusion is exacerbated by the fact that approximately 80% of the Saharai population does not reside in the territory (Sanz, 2023), as it is dispersed across exile, diaspora, and refugee camps. Only the remaining 20% live in their native cities, primarily El Aaiún (Laayoune, the largest city in Western Sahara) and Dajla (Dakhla, formerly Villa Cisneros during Spanish colonial rule), both under Moroccan occupation.

Looking ahead to 2030, Morocco has announced large-scale investment projects involving electrolysis plants and wind and solar parks. However, a substantial portion of these projects are located in the occupied Sáhara Occidental (Por un Sahara libre, 2025), specifically in the occupied cities of Dajla and Boujador (Boujdour, a coastal city in Western Sahara). In Dajla, a solar plant has been installed with the potential to generate approximately 1.2 GW of renewable energy for hydrogen electrolysis and limited domestic consumption. In Boujador, the Boujador Wind Farm project is underway: a facility with a projected capacity of 500 GW, primarily intended for export to Europe.

Sáhara Occidental is endowed with significant natural and territorial wealth, including some of the world's largest phosphate reserves and substantial potential for renewable energy generation. However, Morocco's illegal exploitation of these resources only deepens the suffering of the Saharai people and prolongs the conflict. This occurs despite the fact that the Moroccan state itself has recently faced a fragile position within the international arena (Amnistía Internacional, 2025).

While Morocco finances the occupation through the usurpation of the territory's resources, the majority of Saharais are forced to live in refugee camps in the Algerian desert, under conditions of poverty and extreme hardship, and are denied any benefit derived from the highly profitable commercial activities conducted on their homeland.

In addition to this material dispossession, the Saharai population living under occupation endures severe hardships linked to political violence, particularly as a response to political and social activism in support of self-determination and solidarity with the Saharai cause.

According to a recent study (Guarch-Rubio et al., 2025), Saharai activists—both civil and political—who assert labor and economic claims over their heritage and resources are subjected to systematic and severe human rights violations. These range from physical abuse and torture to total exclusion from economic activity, resulting in profound psychodramatic consequences for those affected.

Natural resources

Western Sahara is located within a natural labyrinth, given the environmental diversity of its natural resources. Below, we outline the main resources and how they are exploited.

Agriculture

The Saharawi territory has a desert climate, with obviously limited possibilities for economic development in agriculture. However, Morocco identified the sector's potential as early as 2002 and began to promote investment initiatives that would generate significant economic and agri-food profits, thereby achieving its broader objective: consolidating the occupation of the territory. This strategy has also reinforced Morocco's presence by persuading other states and intergovernmental organizations to engage as commercial partners.

In the Dakhla (Dajla) region, the agricultural sector employed around 4,000 temporary workers on ten-month contracts and approximately 200 permanent workers as early as 2008. By 2010, these figures had risen to 6,480 workers, the vast majority of whom were of Moroccan origin.

Although agriculture is economically less significant than fishing and phosphate extraction, it has become a key geopolitical enclave for strengthening Moroccan colonial presence in the occupied territories of the Saharawi Republic.

Agricultural production is based mainly on tomatoes, melons, and cucumbers, with most production concentrated in the Dakhla region. Tomato production dominates, accounting for around 80% of total output, while melons and cucumbers make up the remaining 20%.

Morocco's primary strategy in this sector is export-oriented, aiming to access international markets, particularly those of the European Union, which is the main commercial destination for these agricultural products. Within the EU, France and Spain lead as importers.

Most of this exploitation, resulting from the extractive practices imposed by the Moroccan occupation, takes place in the occupied province of Dakhla. The products then enter the European continent after commercialization, with France -specifically the city of Perpignan- serving as a major hub for entry, logistics, and distribution of fruits and vegetables to the rest of Europe. As an illustrative figure, in 2010 alone Morocco exported more than 60,000 tons of agricultural products from the territory.

Phosphates

Following the discovery of phosphate mineral deposits in Western Sahara by the geologist Manuel Alía Medina in 1945, the Francoist Spanish state ordered the National Company Adaro for Mining Research S.A. (Empresa Nacional Adaro de Investigaciones Mineras S.A., ENADIMSA) to carry out research and exploitation of the phosphate basin in order to supply Spain's national phosphate fertilizer industry (Martínez, 2017).

After failing to attract foreign investment, the Spanish government decided to proceed independently

with extraction and commercialization. The company Fosbucraa (Fosfatos de Bu Craa S.A.), dependent on the National Institute of Industry of Spain's National-Catholic dictatorship, was established in 1969 and generated multimillion-dollar profits in 1974 and 1975. In parallel, the Spanish government built a conveyor belt of approximately 100 kilometers linking the Bu Craa mines to the coast of El Aaiún (Laayoune), facilitating export (Martínez, 2017a).

During the 1990s, phosphate production in Western Sahara began to increase steadily, a trend that has continued into the 21st century. Average extraction reached around 1.8 million tons per year up to 2021, with a total value between then and 2022 of approximately 2.289 billion US dollars.

Algae, sand, and tourism

Algae are another natural resource of Western Sahara, initially exploited by Spain during the colonial period and later by Morocco to the present day. The rich and extensive Saharawi coastline contains a wide variety of algae used for food products, animal feed, or agricultural fertilizer, as well as in the food industry as stabilizers.

During Spanish colonial rule, ministerial orders -such as the Order of June 15, 1965, published in the Official State Gazette (Boletín Oficial del Estado, BOE)- regulated the collection and exploitation of algae along the coast of the Sahara Province, establishing a specific legal regime for this resource. Morocco, by contrast, has given limited importance to the algae industry, although in 2022 it built a large algae plant aimed at capturing carbon from the atmosphere.

Environmental groups have raised complaints about the emergence of an invasive algae species, which they claim originates from algae cultivation promoted by the Moroccan regime in Western Sahara.

Regarding sand, Morocco also exports sand from Western Sahara to other countries for use in the cement industry and beach regeneration projects. This resource is abundant due to the territory's desert geography, particularly in inland areas. Saharawi sand, characterized by its blond-brown color, is considered ideal for coastal tourist landscapes and contributes to visually appealing beaches.

Finally, tourism also constitutes a significant sector that reinforces Morocco's occupation of Western Sahara. This sector began to develop after the 1991 ceasefire signed between the Saharawi Republic and Morocco under the auspices of the United Nations. Prior to that, ongoing military escalation prevented economic stability and investment. Today, however, the territory -particularly the city of Dakhla- has become one of the most intensively promoted tourist destinations by Morocco, with added appeal due to its Atlantic peninsular location.

Fishing

To this day, fishing remains one of the main economic pillars of Western Sahara, generating enormous benefits for the occupying power. The territory has an extensive Atlantic coastline exceeding 1,600 kilometers, hosting a rich diversity of marine and fishing resources.

Environmental sustainability and the colonial use of natural resources

Once we have seen how Morocco sustains its occupation of Western Sahara (Sáhara Occidental) economically and geographically, we now turn to the environmental and ecological sustainability dimension, which has also become a central arena of permanent Moroccan presence and activity.

Morocco pursues an environmental and economic strategy through the development of ambitious energy projects in the Occupied Territories of Western Sahara. These projects are diverse in scope and typology, ranging from solar installations to green hydrogen initiatives. However, they operate in direct violation of international and environmental norms, as they reinforce Morocco's illegal occupation of the territory and generate additional profits for large multinational corporations without the free, prior, and informed consent of the Saharawi people, as required by international courts.

These projects are also associated with demographic transformations that further exacerbate the vulnerability of the Saharawi population. Morocco actively promotes the transfer of Moroccan settlers into the territory, including workers and technicians linked to the energy sector. This policy of internal colonization, which favors the hiring of settlers over the indigenous Saharawi population, violates the Fourth Geneva Convention (prohibiting an occupying power from transferring parts of its civilian population into the territory it occupies). Such practices erode the presence and influence of the Saharawi people in their own land, both economically and politically.

In addition, Western Sahara possesses vast geographic conditions suitable for large-scale energy generation. Solar power plants alone could theoretically produce enough energy to meet a significant share of the current electricity demand of the European Union (EU) (Cordis, 2022).

Western Sahara also offers optimal conditions for wind energy production, with high and constant wind speeds along both the coastal strip and the interior of the territory. Morocco has capitalized on these conditions by developing multiple wind power projects in the occupied territory, again in blatant contradiction with international law and without Saharawi consent.

Among the most significant developments are the wind farms in Bojador (300 MW), Aftissat I (200 MW), and Aftissat II (200 MW), which generate substantial amounts of electricity, much of which is integrated into Morocco's national electricity grid.

These projects are strategically located in areas such as El Aaiún (Laayoune, main city of Western Sahara), Bu Craa (phosphate mining area), and Dajla (Dakhla, coastal city in occupied Western

Sahara), and have involved agreements with international companies. These include the Polish firm Green Capital, which has identified new sites for future installations in Bu Craa and near Dajla. Likewise, companies such as Taqa and Nareva plan to develop a large-scale wind project of 1,200 MW in the occupied Saharawi territory, accompanied by a 1,400 km transmission line intended to transport electricity into internationally recognized Moroccan territory. Multinational corporations such as Siemens Gamesa (Germany), Enel Green Power (Italy), Engie and Volitalia (France), among others, also participate in this energy expansion.

Finally, the other major energy sector exploited by Morocco is solar power, once again without Saharawi consent and in violation of internationally recognized rights such as self-determination and permanent sovereignty over natural resources. Western Sahara has exceptional solar potential, with radiation levels reaching 3,000 to 3,500 hours per year and an intensity of approximately 5.3 kWh/m²/day, placing it among the regions with the highest solar irradiation in North Africa. These conditions make it an ideal environment for large-scale solar energy projects.

However, the indigenous Saharawi population receives no benefit from this exploitation. As a result, the socioeconomic and environmental consequences of this plunder are severe. On the one hand, these projects support the illegal and colonial settlement of the territory, especially considering that the majority of the Saharawi population has lived in exile or as refugees outside the territory since 1975. On the other hand, the ongoing military occupation produces material and environmental damage with lasting negative effects on the land.

The environmental consequences of the energy and mining activities promoted by Morocco in Western Sahara are increasingly evident. Although these initiatives are presented as sustainable development projects, the construction and operation of renewable energy infrastructure—particularly wind farms, solar plants, and green hydrogen facilities—entail profound territorial transformations and disruptions to fragile ecosystems.

Among the most significant impacts are:

1. Fragmentation of natural habitats, affecting migratory birds, small mammals, desert reptiles, and endemic plant species. This fragmentation also impacts essential pollinator populations, such as bees and native insects, which are crucial for the resilience of desert ecosystems.
2. Soil erosion and compaction, resulting from the installation of wind turbines, solar panels, and access roads. These alterations degrade the already fragile desert surface and threaten subterranean species such as the Saharan silver ant and various species of scorpions.
3. Water degradation, in an environment already marked by extreme water scarcity. Green

hydrogen projects anticipate extracting large volumes of underground water resources, increasing pressure on aquifers that are vital for endemic species and desert-adapted amphibians, while also directly affecting human communities that depend on these resources for survival.

These transformations further intensify the ecological fragility of the region and compromise the long-term sustainability of both ecosystems and traditional ways of life. In particular, Saharawi communities—whose economies are linked to pastoralism, small-scale agriculture, and water collection—are disproportionately affected.

The absence of environmental impact assessments that include Saharawi participation only deepens the injustice of these developments. What is occurring in Western Sahara is not a model of just ecological transition; it is a clear manifestation of climate injustice. The so-called “green transition” is a tool of occupation, allowing Morocco to reinforce territorial control under the guise of environmental leadership.

The exploitation of land and resources without the consent of the Saharawi people reproduces colonial dynamics of dispossession, exclusion, and inequality. International complicity further aggravates this situation. Despite judicial rulings that invalidate economic agreements concerning Western Sahara in the absence of Saharawi consent, foreign companies and governments continue to invest in extractive projects in the territory. These investments legitimize the occupation and undermine international principles of self-determination, ethical investment, and climate responsibility.

Geopolitical, Economic, and International Dimensions of the Colonization of Western Sahara

The opacity—and international complicity—exercised by States regarding the Saharawi question, and the plundering of Saharawi natural and territorial resources, have compelled the Saharawi people to bring claims before international courts in order to denounce these acts and to demand respect for their sovereignty over their resources and for their exclusive right to self-determination.

These legal actions have been pursued since approximately 2012. The Frente Polisario (Polisario Front, the Saharawi national liberation movement) -as the sole and legitimate representative of the Saharawi people- initiated proceedings seeking the annulment of the free trade agreements between Morocco and the European Union, insofar as these agreements include the territory of Western Sahara (Sáhara Occidental). Such inclusion violates existing international law, given that Morocco has no internationally recognized sovereignty over Western Sahara, and contravenes United Nations resolutions concerning a Non-Self-Governing Territory with a right to self-determination and decolonization.

The General Court of the European Union ruled that the Frente Polisario must be regarded as a legal person for the purposes of Article 263, fourth paragraph, of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). This recognition grants it standing to bring actions before the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) against EU acts that directly affect it, such as trade agreements with Morocco. The Court acknowledged the Frente Polisario as the representative of the Saharawi people and a key interlocutor in the process of self-determination of Western Sahara.

Indeed, the active legal standing of the Frente Polisario is grounded in its role as a National Liberation Movement (Movimiento de Liberación Nacional, MLN) recognized by the United Nations, engaged in resistance against Morocco's illegal occupation and protected under international law, particularly UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV), which legitimizes the struggle for self-determination of colonized peoples. This status confers international legal personality and the capacity to act in international and regional fora such as the European Union, establishing the Frente Polisario as a legitimate political interlocutor rather than a terrorist entity.

Consequently, the ongoing failure to comply with international law continues to have direct consequences for the colonization of Western Sahara and for the ongoing plunder of its natural and territorially linked resources, in violation of the Saharawi people's right to permanent sovereignty over natural resources, despite the international recognition of the *Frente Polisario*.

Conclusion: A Persistent Occupation Inherited from Colonialism That Continues into the Twenty-First Century

For the Sahrawi people, the presence of an illegal occupation over their land entails nothing other than the continuous plundering of their natural resources and the blatant violation of their fundamental and human rights. In all economic activity related to the industrial exploitation of natural resources, the Sahrawi population residing in the Occupied Territories of Western Sahara does not benefit at all, nor are they even minimally able to directly engage in or control such activities.

For Morocco, all these investments in the territory are used to attract its own population to the Sahara, thereby reinforcing its dominance and strengthening its illegal occupation. Consequently, economic exploitation gives rise to multiple implications—political, legal, and environmental. From a political standpoint, these implications manifest in the persistent obstruction of a peaceful resolution to the conflict that would allow the Sahrawi people to freely exercise their right to self-determination under the auspices of the United Nations, as demanded by all UN resolutions since 1975.

From a legal perspective, violations of international norms—particularly international humanitarian law—are systematic and ongoing. These include illegal detentions, house arrests of Sahrawi human rights activists, imprisonment, and unjust and unlawful convictions of Sahrawi political activists,

including Sahrawi civilian university students.

With regard to environmental issues and ecological transitions, these foreign investment plans in Western Sahara run counter to any form of legality that claims to litigate or operate economically in Western Sahara. Moreover, it must be recalled that this contradiction is plainly evident, given that this is one of the most heavily militarized occupations currently in force worldwide, considering the presence of the largest military wall in the world within Sahrawi territory, which divides and separates the population (Soroeta, 2024).

Accordingly, the possibility of pursuing a sustainable pathway is rendered unviable by the ongoing military occupation of Western Sahara, materialized through the systematic violation of the Sahrawi people's human rights. Nevertheless, these tenders for foreign investment in a non-self-governing territory that is illegally occupied generate a persistent violation of international law, thereby challenging regional and international economies within a global context marked by profound and continuous geopolitical transformations -social, environmental, and even technological- given that Morocco is also subjecting the Sahrawi people to what can be described as a form of informational silence.

Regarding human rights violations, three phases can be identified since the beginning of the conflict in 1975. The most recent phase began in November 2020, with the resumption of armed conflict following the violation of the ceasefire signed in 1991, thus bringing the peaceful path to an end. Specifically, during this phase, according to Sahrawi activist collectives and Sahrawi human rights associations, political detentions of Sahrawi citizens, home raids, restrictions on freedom of movement, kidnapping, physical and verbal torture, and killings have been documented (Codesa, 2022).

Foreign human rights observers in the occupied territory have also faced restrictions or outright entry bans, as Morocco has blocked more than 350 visits since 2012, ranging from politicians to activists, including internationally recognized organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and Members of the European Parliament (Lafarga, 2025). The history of colonialism -and occupation, in places such as Palestine- continues to wreak havoc in the present day (Sidahmed, 2025), and foreign domination continues to mock international law while also plundering the Sahara.

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